The Southern PATRIOT

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N.O. Officials Urged to End Bus Segregation Voluntarily

A distinguished group of New Orleanians, white and Negro, last month asked for voluntary desegregation of the city's transit vehicles.

More than 100 persons from all walks of life and including 42 clergymen signed a statement which was presented to the mayor and to the president of the transit lines.

The document declared, in part:

"Our local authorities have pointed out that the federal courts have not ordered bus integration for this area specifically, but no one can seriously doubt that this will come . . . To ignore or attempt to circumscribe what must come would give strength to lawlessness and make the eventual outcome far from peaceful. We therefore urge our local authorities not to wait for court order, but rather to initiate a positive program of compliance with what eventually must be considered a law of the United States.

"We are convinced that our city has within it the capability of solving this problem peaceably and amicably. New Orleans is proud of its cosmopolitan character. Its population derives from a greater variety of cultural, social, religious, economic and national origins than that of any other city in the South.

"This background encourages us to hope that New Orleans authorities will not permit our city to drift into the pattern of violence and bitterness that we have witnessed elsewhere, but will instead provide a demonstration of how a great international center can face and solve a difficult problem of human relations."

The statement naturally drew fire from the White Citizens Councils. The Southern Conference Educational Fund coordinated the project, so WCC spokesmen pointed out that the SCEF "had been investigated" for Communist activity by the Eastland committee.

A former official of the Louisiana P-TA was among the signers, so the WCC attempted to smear her by citing the organization's opposition to a proposed state loyalty oath for P-TA members.

But if these aspersions and others were hollow and absurd on the face, there were still those whom they intimidated. One such establishment was the New Orleans **Item**, an afternoon newspaper.

Ewing Poteet, drama and music critic for the **Item** for the past eight years, had signed the statement. Two days after the statement was presented, Poteet was fired.

George Chaplin, Nieman fellow who is editor of the paper, denied that Poteet's "personal views or convictions" were the cause of the ouster. But he is understood to have told clergymen protesting the action that Poteet had "compromised the independence" of the **Item**.

The **Item** is owned by David Stern, Jr., son of the Philadelphia publisher well-known for his pro-New Deal views during the Roosevelt era. Recently the younger Stern added a Philadelphia paper to his journalistic interests.

On racial issues the **Item's** "independence" has consisted mainly of hunting with the hounds and hiding with the hares. Editorially it is mute on major developments.

The American Newspaper Guild is the bargaining representative for the paper's editorial employes and is considering taking the Poteet case to arbitration.

Old Informers Never Die . . .

Old informers never die—they just go South.

This month in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, a full pack of professional self-styled ex-Communists appeared before a committee of the state senate to sing their shopworn refrains.

Remember the pair who got in hot water for making wild aspersions against Dr. Bunche? They were there, Manning Johnson and Leonard Patterson. Longtime testifier Joseph Kornfedder showed up to tell about his erstwhile friendship with Joseph Stalin. And another perennial Mrs. Martha Edmiston of Ohio provided the feminine touch.

An assistant New Orleans police superintendent appeared as the first witness. Since he was under suspension from the force for his part in a French Quarter night club incident, he made an appropriate keynoter.

The sideshow had been assembled by Sen. W. M. Rainach—Louisiana's little Eastland—"to develop the general influences that are disturbing the peace and tranquility that normally exists. . ." He invited legislators and schoolmen from Mississippi, South Carolina and Georgia to come and be enlightened.

The hearing room was only half-filled most of the time, and the venture got a cold shoulder from Governor Earl Long.

(Continued on page 4)

—Photo courtesy N. O. Times-Picayune

Representing the signers of the New Orleans petition were, from the left, Fr. Eugene McManus, St. Augustine's High School; Rev. Clarence H. Snelling, Jr., Methodist chaplain, Tulane University; Rev. Thomas C. Aycock, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, and Dean Samuel L. Gandy, Dillard University chaplain.

Testimony Bares Need for Rights Bill; Eastland Frets

The progress of civil rights legislation in the Senate Judiciary Committee is exceedingly—but not unexpectedly—slow. Eastland is in charge.

The testimony of Mississippi victims was received coldly and querulously by Senator Erwin of N. C., who just **happened** to be presiding.

However, these stories of civil rights abuses did get into the record:

1. Mrs. Beatrice Young of Jackson, Miss., told how she was beaten and jailed by a deputy sheriff after she had demanded that he show a search warrant before entering her home. She lost her unborn child, probably due to the beating.

2. Rev. W. D. Ridgeway of Hattiesburg stated that less than 25 of the 13,000 Negro residents in his county are permitted to register to vote. He himself had been turned down on numerous occasions.

3. Gus Courts of Belzoni described the manner in which he had been harassed and finally shot for refusal to withdraw his name from the voting rolls. He said that, during an NAACP-sponsored registration drive, 400 Negroes paid their poll taxes, but only 94 were allowed to register. A campaign of intimidation reduced this number to 22, and finally he was the only Negro voter left.

But despite the rough going for the bill, Congressional observers still see the chances are good for "meaningful" legislation on the subject, with a showdown coming on the Senate floor late in April or in May.

The House Judiciary committee has already approved a bill which would permit the U.S. Attorney-General to institute civil suits against rights offenders and would establish a Civil Rights Commission to investigate the plight of minority groups. (The powers of the commission have been watered down considerably.)

An interesting admission of the likelihood of a Senate showdown, despite all filibuster efforts, came from Senator Eastland himself. He decried the legislative proposals as "monstrous," but at the same time concedes the possibility of a cloture vote limiting debate.

As a second line of defense, Eastland has drawn up a series of amendments to the pending bills which would "remove part of the iniquities." He would deny "the unsupported affidavit of a racial agitator, imported trouble maker or political opportunist" as basis for court action. The Justice Department would have no part in the proceedings. And, particularly, no injunctions could be issued without trial by jury.

Eastland, the great defender of the Constitution, frets: "I am very apprehensive that we will see attempted in many parts of the South what already has happened in the judicial proceedings at Clinton, Tenn. It appears that at Clinton an attempt is being made to intimidate by the abuse of the powers to arrest the people of that area, and in addition, to deny them freedom of speech and freedom of assembly."

Credit Union Will Fight Loan Sharks

One of the most debilitating institutions in the South—second in viciousness only to segregation—is the "loan shark."

Petty money-lenders cling like barnacles to the Negro section of almost every Southern city. They grow fat on the leanness of Negro paychecks—offering loans of $5 and up to tide workers over and then exacting interest of 100 per cent and more. They use flim-flammery, threats, and even violence to keep their victims in line.

The laws governing these lending operations are generally lax. In Alabama, for example, state law declares that charging more than 8 per cent interest is illegal—but there is no penalty for such illegality!

About a year and a half ago, the attorney general of Alabama tried to crack down on the sharks by prosecuting them as "public nuisances." This indirect approach sent them to cover for a while—but only a while.

Last month, in Montgomery, Rev. M. L. King announced that the Montgomery Improvement Assn., which had organized the historic bus boycott, was now going to form a credit union for the city's Negro residents. By making loans available at low interest rates, the MIA hopes to end the loan-company evil. (Furthermore, it could be added, the credit union would provide a buttress against attempts by the White Citizens Councils to apply "economic pressure.")

A successful precedent for such action exists in Gastonia, N. C., where the 15-year-old Excelsior Credit Union holds assets of $510,923. According to the **Carolina Times**, this organization is responsible for innumerable community gains—new business opportunities, better homes, and a higher percentage of registered voters than other North Carolina cities.

Wade Home Crumbles As Builders Quibble

Andrew Wade's house in Louisville was dynamited nearly three years ago; cost of repair was estimated at $5,512—and an insurance company stood ready to pay the cost.

But the house remains a battered, weather-ravaged husk—a monument to the legal persecution Wade and his friends have suffered.

On March 1 a circuit judge refused to allow insurance payments to be applied to repairing the house. The insurance firm had turned over the money to the court. The judge said the policy was made out to the first mortgage holders, the South End Federal Savings and Loan Assn., and to the builder, James I. Rone, to be applied as "their interests may appear."

Although South End and Rone are seeking foreclosure on the property "to protect their investment," they have not seen fit to halt its deterioration.

Books in Brief

HUMAN RELATIONS IN INTERRACIAL HOUSING, by WILNER, WALKLEY, AND COOK, University of Minnesota Press, $4.00.

What is the effect of Negro-white residential proximity on race relations? This book seeks a scientific answer through a comparative study of four housing projects, two segregated and two integrated.

The evidence indicates that proximity generally provides contacts and attitudes favorable to harmonious and cordial relationships.

Koinonia Rejects Klan's Offer to Buy Its Property

On March 3 Norman Long, president of Koinonia Farm in Americus, Ga., formally refused an offer to sell out to the Ku Klux Klan. He declared:

"The Koinonia community is unanimously agreed that we must continue to bear witness here in Sumter County to the way of life to which God has called us. We express this intention firmly, not in defiance or in stubborn lack of consideration for the feelings of our neighbors but because we feel there are basic principles at stake which we cannot forsake at any cost."

A Klan caravan visited the interracial agricultural cooperative on Feb. 24 and promised to arrange a buyer for it. On March 23 more shots were fired into the farm's living quarters.

Aubrey Williams Writes: The Man With the Hammer

By AUBREY WILLIAMS

When is the South going to stop beating itself over the head with this race prejudice business? One thing is certain; it is not helping the South any. It is bad any way you look at it. It will destroy any man or people if indulged in long enough. It is keeping industry out of the South, and is causing our best young people to leave the South. Sixty-five per cent of white young people who graduate from Mississippi colleges leave the state every year and go elsewhere.

You have to admit Mississippi is very generous in this, they spend probably $10,000 on some young fellow and he goes somewhere else and Mississippi gets nothing for its ten thousand dollars. Multiply that $10,000 by sixty-five per cent and you see how generous they are to some other States.

Pimpernick, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

LOOK UP, BROTHERS

We hit ourselves on the head in other ways. The Southern white laborer is knocking himself out of better wages. The wages paid Negroes on farms sets the wages for every one whose work is dependent upon Southern agriculture.

There is an old saying that you can't keep a man down in a ditch without staying down there with him in order to hold him down. The same is true in the cities of the South. Wages paid to Negroes set the wage levels, for the minimum is what everything above it is based on.

Holding the Negro down cost the white South dearly in tax burdens. If Negroes made more money they could carry a greater part of the tax burden. In Mississippi a few years ago there were 17 taxes levied against a home in building it. A tax for each window, a tax for a door, a tax for a bath tub, etc. The State was taking just about everything a man earned. Per capita income in the deep South is the lowest in the nation, while taxes are the highest. Farm income is the lowest and likewise wages are lowest.

The South has too long flayed itself with this whiplash. Its main victim is none other than itself. We make it difficult, if not impossible for our preachers to preach a full, pure Christian faith. We give our children a schooling held down by an undertow of crippling limitations. Here we are, living in the Nation, that the whole world looks to as its hope and chief reliance, to hold and obtain freedom, yet the teachers in Southern white schools dare not discuss freedom, or human rights.

The saddest part about this is that a vast number of Southern white people do not go along with this. They are silent, for they fear to speak out. But they are sick of it. A minister said recently to a friend, "I have been a prisoner of my conscience for twenty years."

The fact is the present situation in the five or six States of the so-called deep south is the work of a few people. Some of these are politicians who use the white-colored relation to promote themselves politically.

Some, who have had little in life, use the situation to bolster their sagging egos. Some use it to keep white workers and colored workers divided. These know if these two great groups ever get together their days of exploiting Southern labor would be ended. All in all there are plenty working at it, but still it is my belief that most of the people in these deep south States are loyal to the United States, they are really and truly Christians, and if it weren't for the leadership of a wrong-headed few, they would act much as people in other parts of this great land of freedom act.

As it is, the life of the average Southerner, is one long apology for the basic American institutions of human rights, equality and freedom.

Letters from Patriot Readers

To the Editor:

I was reared in Clifton Forge, Virginia . . . was one of the first women to enter the graduate school of the University of Virginia . . . have been a citizen of New York City for 26 years and worked in the New York Public Library all of that time with people of all races and religions.

I feel that white children have been hurt by segregation just as Negro children have, but not in such an ugly way. This whole pattern hurt me when I was a child and I have seen it hurt other people of other races.

Today people are showing tremendous courage. I wonder if I would have the courage to send my small children into those schools in the South with the frightening things they have to put up with. The courage those people have shown is almost heart-breaking, but heart-lifting to the young and the old.

MRS. E. K. MORRISON,
New York, N. Y.

* * *

To the Editor:

I have great admiration for the work of the SCEF.

LANGSTON HUGHES,
New York, N. Y.

To the Editor:

I value your publication and very much appreciate having it to help with our work up here. . .

MURRAY KUBIT,
Consumer-Farmer Milk Coop.
Long Island, N. Y.

* * *

To the Editor:

I am interested in securing some extra copies of the February issue of the **Patriot** because of the reprint of the clever ad from Mr. East's **Petal Paper**. . . It is encouraging to find voices raised for human rights in the deepest of the South.

ELIZABETH PROVENCE,
Jacksonville, Fla.

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Our thanks go to the scores of friends who responded to last month's appeal from SCEF president, Aubrey W. Williams, for financial aid to the Inter-Civic Council of Tallahassee. The following letter was especially appreciated.

To the Editor:

This letter (from Mr. Williams) is so concise, logical and fundamentally right that I am impelled to do my best to help.

NAME WITHHELD,
Washington, D. C.